ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORY

101 [77] THE Paiutes now living outside Burns, in southeastern Oregon, are remnants of the Wadadika (Wada Eaters) band of the northern Paiutes. Their former habitat was Harney Valley, centering around Malheur and Harney Lakes and extending north to the headwaters of the Silvies and Silver rivers and south to Catlow Valley. On the east the members of the band wandered as far as Drewsey and Riverside on the Malheur River and the eastern base of the Steenes Mountains, and on the west to the vicinity of Wagontire.[1] They did not [423 621] consider that they owned this land to the exclusion of all other people but in their seasonal wanderings they kept pretty much within these boundaries. They were surrounded by other Paiute bands who, like the Harney Valley Paiute, were named after their staple food. On the north were the Hunibuidika (Hunibui Eaters) and Patihichidika (Elk Eaters), on the northeast the Agaidika (Salmon Eaters), on the southeast the Tagudika (Tagu Eaters) (Jordan Valley Paiute), on the south the Guinidiba (?) (McDermitt Paiutes), on the southwest the Gididika (Ground Hog Eaters) (Surprise Valley Paiute) and Yapadika (Yapa Eaters), and on the northwest the Watihichidika (Juniper-Deer Eaters).[2]

132 The area formerly inhabited by the Wada Eaters is semi-arid, the rainfall being four to eighteen inches yearly. The mean temperature is forty-six degrees Fahrenheit but varies from one degree in the winter to one hundred degrees in the summer. The flora of the valley and foothills is that of the artemesia belt of the

[1] See map. For detailed account of their terrain see "Tribal Distributions in Eastern Oregon and Adjacent Regions" by Verne F. Ray and others (*American Anthropologist*, vol. 40, no. 3, July-September, 1938).

101 114 [2] This picture of the band distribution corresponds roughly with Omer Stewart's mapping in *The Northern Paiute Bands* (Anthropological Records of the University of California, vol. 2, no. 3, 1939), although he does not differentiate between Juniper-Deer Eaters and Hunibui Eaters and places the Salmon Eaters further east. He also includes the Elk Eaters with the Hunibui Eaters. Actually each one of these bands could be broken up into smaller units. There was no real political organization within the bands and the named groups merely designated people who tended to visit the same food gathering locales year after year. These people also generally wintered in camps clustered around the same vicinity. In the case of the Wada Eaters they wintered in the vicinity of Wadaba (Malheur Lake), which was the place where wada grew most plentifully. The Tsitsiadi, which Stewart mentions as a separate tribe, was the name given to a group of families who wintered east of the Steenes. They consisted of four brothers and their families. One brother married Old Winimucca's daughter, which probably explains the statement made by Stewart that Old Winimucca was their chief (see Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 134). Actually they were most closely affiliated with the Wada Eaters, but during the troubled times preceding and during the Bannock uprising they joined old Winimucca's faction.

7: Whiting E-5 (1936-1938) 1950
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

Upper Sonoran zone as described by Steward,[3] and consists primarily of desert shrubs, including many different varieties of sagebrush and greasewood. Around the lakes and along the streams there are grasses and other plants, the seeds, roots, or berries of which were used for food. Willow bushes also grow along the streams. Where the elevation is higher than 5,000 feet, juniper and mahogany trees are found. Deer, mountain sheep, and antelope live in the foothills and jackrabbits abound throughout the terrain.

The nature of the environment is such that although the region included approximately 6,192 square miles it did not support more than about two hundred individuals. This estimate is for the period just preceding the establishment of the Malheur Reservation in 1872 and would indicate that including the entire region over which the people wandered, the average density of population was one person per thirty square miles.[4] It is possible, however, that the population was denser at an earlier period, as stories are told of two bad epidemics which took a large toll of life two generations ago.[5] My estimate is computed from reports of the winter camp groups which existed in the childhood of old informants.

In the old days, the entire life of the Paiutes was oriented around the quest for food, which was none too plentiful. Around the first of May when the first green shoots broke through the ground, they left their winter camps and went to those places where they knew the early edible roots abounded. Nigger Flat, in the northeast corner of the valley, was the most frequented place and many families camped here while the women dug *epos* (Yapa, Carum oreganum Wats), *hu. ni'bui* (Lomatium macrocarpium C and R), *tsuga* and *sanatsuga* (unidentified). While the women were gathering these roots and preparing the *tsuga* and some *yapa* for storage, the men visited the Drewsey River to set up and repair their salmon traps so that they would be ready for the spring run. When their work was over, the women moved down to the river with their skin sacks full of roots and helped the men dry the salmon which they caught. When the run was over, the group broke up and families wandered off by themselves, hunting deer, sagehens, and other birds and collecting the different seeds and roots as they ripened. The first seed to ripen was the sunflower, *aki* and *kusiaki* (Balsamorhiza hooken Nutt). Later the women went to those places where *atza* (Sisymbrium Sophia L.) grew in large quantities. This seed was cached for winter consumption. Most of these early plants grew well in the northern part of the valley.

Around the fifteenth of July, families began to congregate at Cow Creek, about five miles east of Harney. Families from all over the valley and from the Hunibui Eater band to the north came to gather crickets. The women went out

[3] Julian H. Steward, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups* (Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 120), p. 17.

[4] See *ibid.*, p. 49, for contrast with other regions of the Great Basin.

[5] One of these may be related to the epidemic of measles which swept through the Cayuse and Umatilla in 1847.

7: Whiting E-5 (1936-1938) 1950
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

early in the morning and caught them, were back by sunrise, and spent the rest of the day roasting, drying, and pounding them and putting them in bags to be cached for the winter. In the evening the men and women gathered for gossip and gambling.

For the rest of the summer the families wandered off by themselves again. July was the month when ground hogs were considered to be the best. Currants and other berries were picked and eaten as they ripened. Fish were caught in the streams. Any game which was encountered was killed and eaten. The families often wandered up toward Seneca and John Day and hunted deer in the timber. In the fall some of the families went up to Canyon City, the men to hunt elk and the women to pick huckleberries.*

Around the first of September the families began to turn south to the vicinity of Malheur Lake and Saddle Butte. Everyone wanted to be on hand when the *wada* (Suaeda depressa var. erecta Wats.) ripened. This was one of the staple seeds and was picked in large quantities for winter consumption. Probably the largest number of people came together at this time and there were many festivities, including circle dances and games of all kinds. Other seeds were gathered at the same time or a little later: *su.nu.*—saltbrush, *tomomi* (unidentified), *i'ape* (Chenpodium), and *wata* (Chenpodium Album L.). From the lakes many people went to Crow Camp to pick chokecherries, which were made into cakes and sun-dried for winter. At this time there were also communal antelope and rabbit drives.

By the first of November the families started to collect their cached foods and to move into their winter camps. Sites were selected which had a spring or some other source of water, a good supply of wood, and where it was known that there was not likely to be a heavy snowfall. Most of the camps were at the foot of hills or in protected regions near the lakes. Here tule mat houses were set up. (During the summer sagebrush enclosures were the only types of structure used.)

The size of the camps ranged from three to ten households. The people who wintered in these camps did not always return to the same place and hence the personnel of the groups changed from year to year. The constituent households of a camp were sometimes related. For example, the group who used to winter at what is now the P Ranch consisted of about six households. Household 1 was made up of a man and his wife, an unmarried daughter, and a divorced son and his child. Household 2 consisted of a man, his wife and children, and an unmarried brother. Household 3 consisted of a man and his wife and his two unmarried brothers and one unmarried sister. The last two households were married couples with their children. The man in Household 1 was the father of the wife in Household 3. Other than this there does not seem to be any kinship tie between the different house-

* During these wanderings they were technically in the terrain of the Hunibui Eaters and Elk Eaters, but inasmuch as these people wandered to the south to get crickets and sometimes to get *wada* there was reciprocal exchange.

Wadàtkuht

THE HOMELAND

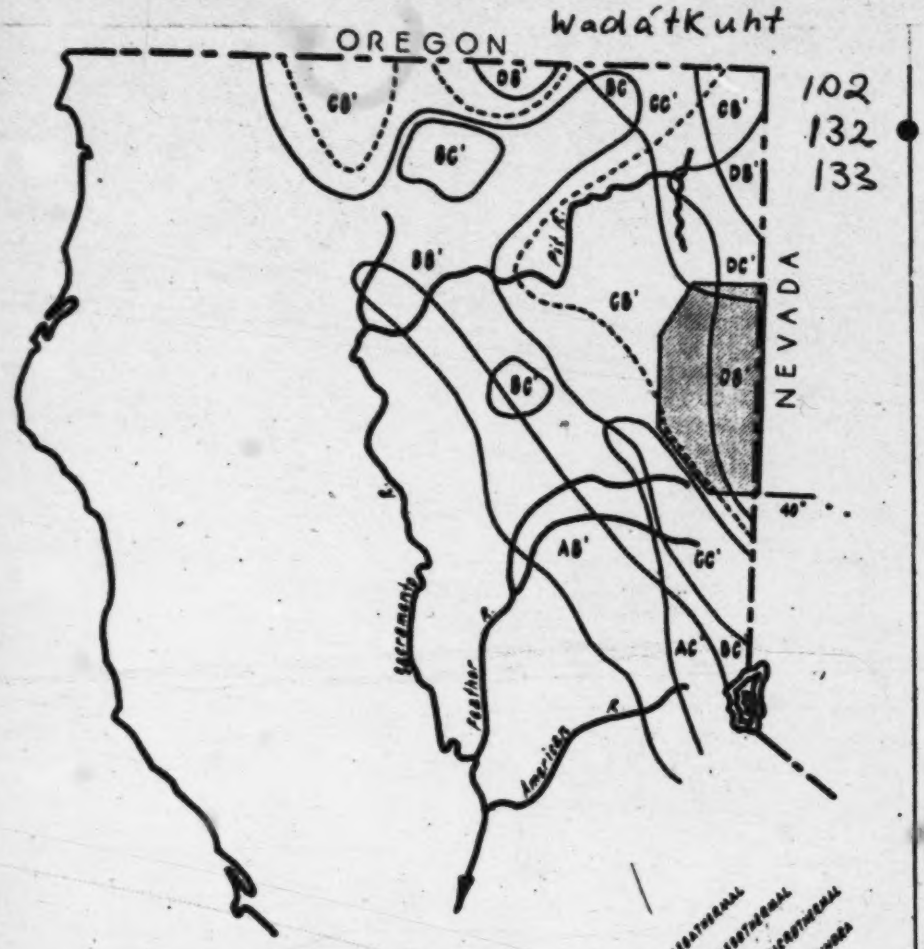
133
[131] Honey Lake Valley, in Northeastern California, lies immediately east of the northern extremity of the Sierra Nevada mountains, of which Diamond Mountain is the northern terminus. The valley takes its name from a large (64,000 acres), shallow (about 12 feet deep at maximum) playa lake [137] whose surface elevation is 3,992 feet above sea level. The timbered Sierra contrasts markedly with the seemingly unending [312] sagebrush terrain to the north and east. It is from the Sierra and its northern and western extensions that the supply of water for Honey Lake, and Eagle Lake to the northwest in Atsugewi territory, comes.

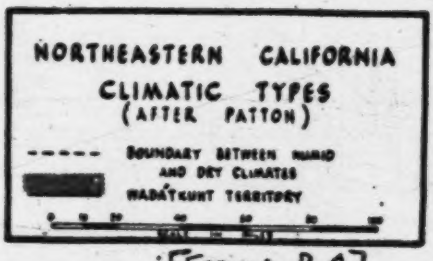
The northern and western sections of the Wadátkuht area are of a volcanic origin and constitute elements of the Modoc [137] lava sheet. In the more elevated and watered areas of this vast sagebrush desert juniper trees are found growing. Susan River and Willow Creek constitute the major streams in the region, but there are numerous other smaller streams, many of an intermittent nature. Honey Lake is a remnant of the ancient Lahontan system, while Eagle Lake, Horse Lake and Madeline Plains were separate large bodies of water during Lahontan times. For the Wadátkuht people the Honey Lake area of their territory was of prime importance as it was at this lake, and on the numerous sloughs of Susan River, that water [137] fowl and fish could be obtained in quantity. The east base (i.e., the west side of the lake) of the Sierra provided groves [262] of oaks which yielded sufficient acorns to keep the Wadátkuht relatively secure from famine. The more arid regions produced the ever important jackrabbit while the higher, timbered [136] regions yielded deer. Other large game animals captured besides the deer were elk, antelope, mountain sheep, and buffalo. The latter, however, appear to have been sufficiently scarce to have been of slight importance. Both black and grizzly bears occurred in the territory but were apparently not too eagerly sought. Besides these various large mammals the Wadátkuht had a wide variety of smaller animals and birds which they utilized for food and/or clothing.

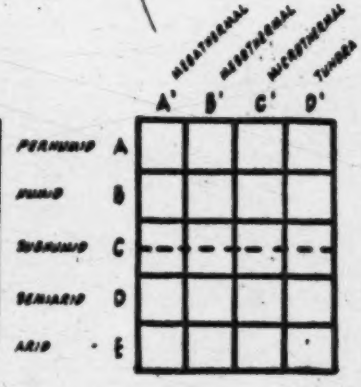
132 The climate of the Wadátkuht territory falls primarily into two types: a) subhumid; and b) semi-arid (see map, Northeastern California Climatic Types). The Wadátkuht were [133] fortunate, however, to be able to utilize the mountainous regions to the south and to the west of their own territory. [221] At certain times of the year they could make hunting and gather- [137] ing forays into the mountain meadows and conifer timbered regions outside their recognized territory.

Wadátkuht

102
132
133







[Facing P. 4]

Wadátkuht

~~800~~ regions outside their recognized territory.

132 Winter temperatures can be extreme in the Honey Lake area with temperatures occasionally falling as low as -20°F in the vicinity of the winter villages of the Wadátkuht. Summer temperatures can exceed 100°F for short periods. Fields of snow often remain on the crest of the Sierra until June, occasionally until August, and snow can be heavy on the valley floor in the winter. Also in the winter Honey Lake Valley may be filled with a dense fog which will remain for several weeks. This same fog shrouded area in the summer, particularly around Honey Lake, may be subjected to choking, blinding dust storms of considerable magnitude. Despite this [137] seemingly harsh environment the Wadátkuht were very fortunate [133] to have groves of oak trees within their territory. They also were fortunate to have Honey Lake and the network of swamps and sloughs of Susan River which attracted myriads of waterfowl to nest and feed. The Wadátkuht environment could be harsh, but it could also be bountiful.

THE HISTORIC PERIOD

175 The date of first contact by Europeans with the Honey Lake Paiute may never be known with any exactness, but it [174] can be assumed that some knowledge of the whites had been obtained by the last quarter of the 18th century. The existence of the Spanish after their founding of the mission at what is now San Francisco in 1776 was certainly known to Indian groups even as remote as the Honey Lake Paiute. Visits by Europeans into the general region are recorded as first having occurred in 1829 when Peter Skene Ogden made a trip west from Salt Lake to northwestern Nevada in that year. In 1830 he traveled from the Columbia River to the Colorado River on a route which lay to the east of the Sierra Nevada. His exact route is not known but it may have been through Nevada rather than in California along the east margin of the Sierra Nevada (Elliott, 1920). There can be little doubt that activities such as his were soon known to all groups neighboring the areas of penetration. It is thus probable that the Honey Lake people had heard rumors and tales of the white people for many years before they actually saw them. In fact, the coming of the whites was "foreseen" by Sanezha wahits, an old shaman. He sang for four or five nights and told the Honey Lake people that something was coming to their country, and that "something" was a white-skinned people. Because of this prediction [787] the Wadátkuht were not too surprised to see the first white

7

The Aboriginal Situation: The Paiute

182 22 [177] At the time of first contact the subsistence activities of the Paiute were based on an exploitation of a none-too-provident environment. The small groups of Paiute who lived together -- with the exception of those occupying the fertile Owens Valley -- appear to have been on the move almost constantly. Harvests of seed had to be made within a few days or weeks at the most, before the ripened seeds were scattered on the ground. Roots, berries, rodents, snakes, fish and insects were sought. Of primary importance were the pinenuts of the mountain areas. These provided a major source of food for survival through the winter. A general survey of foods available suggests that the area could support a larger number of people than 161 it actually did (Steward, 1938, 14-33). Population figures show a high density in the Owens Valley (2.1 sq. mi. per person) to a low at Beatty (44 sq. mi. per person). In the area immediately to the north of Washo country -- called vaguely the Humboldt River country, in which the Carson Sink, Pyramid Lake and Humboldt Lake are located -- density ranged from 2.5 sq. 132 mi. per person at Battle Mountain to 5 sq. mi. per person at Halleck and 161 Wells (Steward, 1938, 48-9). The sporadic rainfall of the area was a lim- 22 iting factor, often failing completely and reducing plant harvests, so that 182 population appears to have been geared to the minimum rather than the maximum food supply.

224 I have included rodents, fish and insects under the gathering aspects [226] of Paiute life. The pronghorn antelope, the jack rabbit, the mule deer and [222] mountain sheep were the animals most frequently hunted. The first two species appear to have been hunted largely in communal drives. The mule deer was hunted occasionally by groups who drove the animals into ambush or over cliffs (Stewart, 1941, 366, 422). Dogs were used by some bands to aid in deer hunting (Stewart, 1941, 422). Deer were also hunted by individuals or small groups of stalkers, a method that appears to have been the only one used to take mountain sheep where these animals were available.

Rabbits were perhaps the most important hunted species because of their relative abundance. Antelope herds were almost totally depleted by a single drive and could not be hunted in the same area for a number of years. [476] The antelope and rabbit were significant in terms of social organization be- [571] cause the communal hunts were among the few occasions when any large number of Paiute assembled in the same place. This, however, was limited by the period of time the captured game could support a large group of people.

182 In general the ecological adaptation of the Paiute was one of small 22 groups of people shifting within relatively wide areas in response to the appearance of various wild crops and animals. The pinenut appears to have